

# ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S OPINIONS ON CURRENT TOPICS:—Freedom of Speech, Labor, Capital, Woman Suffrage, Prohibition and Mexican Intervention



President Lincoln taking the oath at his second inauguration, March 4, 1865.  
Wood cut reproduced from a photograph, Harper's Weekly, March 18, 1865.

By MARJORIE MCKEOWN.

WERE a Lincoln to come to the rescue in these days of an unsettled world, what light would he shed on things political, economic, social? What would his attitude be toward the problems of our day, toward freedom of speech and freedom of the press, radicalism, capital and labor, the Mexican situation, woman suffrage and prohibition?

Many of these questions arose in his day, but unlike secession and slavery, were not the dominant problems of the time. However, he voiced his opinion on these subjects, and from this opinion something of his attitude today may be gleaned. Not a fair test this, entirely, for the thought of the world has progressed much since that April day in 1865 when Abraham Lincoln was laid to rest. And one may be sure that Abraham Lincoln would have kept abreast of the times.

Turning, then, to freedom of speech and freedom of the press. These were topics upon which Lincoln said little directly, but all his actions showed him in accord with the greatest liberality. He recognized the necessity of curbing attacks that would react against the morale of the Army, but beyond that he showed himself in sympathy with complete freedom of speech, even in war time. He greatly regretted the arrest of Clement L. Vallandigham, the leader of the Copperheads. In fact, the arrest of Vallandigham took him entirely by surprise—he had been apprised of it beforehand, he probably would have prevented it. As it was, he commuted Vallandigham's sentence from imprisonment to deportation behind the Confederate lines "with his friends"—a method of punishment which appealed to Lincoln's sense of humor and to the country's.

Referring to the charge made that Vallandigham was arrested for no other reason than criticism of the administration, Lincoln said, "If this assertion is the truth and the whole truth—if there was no

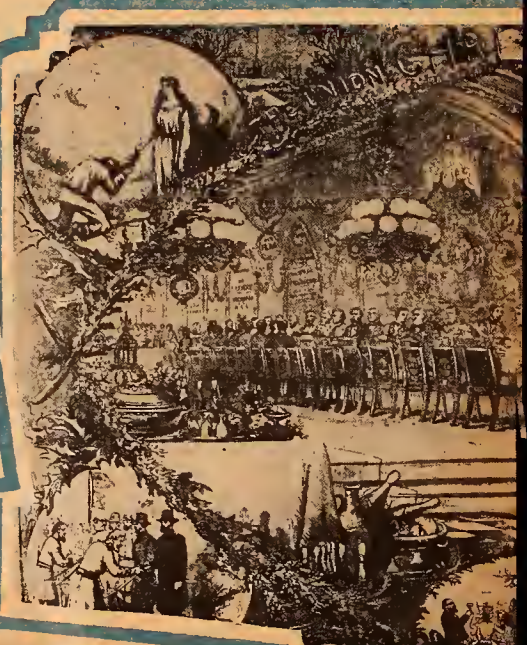
other reason for his arrest, then I concede that the arrest was wrong. But he was not arrested because he was damaging the political prospects of the Administration, or the personal interests of the commanding general, but because he was damaging the Army, upon the existence and vigor of which the life of the Nation depends. He was warring upon the military, and this gave the military constitutional jurisdiction to lay hands upon him."

Further he declared, "Nor am I able to appreciate the danger. . . . that the American people will, by means of military arrests during the rebellion, lose the right of public discussion, the liberty of speech and the press, trial by jury and habeas corpus, throughout the indefinite peaceful future, which I trust, lies before them, any more than I am able to believe that a man could contract so strong an appetite for emetics, during temporary illness, as to persist in feeding upon them during the remainder of his healthy life."

However, the President made this striking admission "And let me say that in my own discretion I do not know whether I would have ordered the arrest of Mr. Vallandigham. . . . I further say that as the war progresses it appears to me opinion and action, which were in great confusion at first, take shape and fall into more regular channels, so that the necessity for strong dealing with them gradually decreases."

Lincoln's later dealings with Vallandigham demonstrated the wisdom of the presidential liberality. Vallandigham was badly defeated for Governor of Ohio, and when he returned to this country—he had gone to Canada after his deportation within the Confederate arms and from there back into the United States—he was immolated. In fact, it was felt that his violent oral attacks upon the Government were a positive benefit to the Administration, and the Democratic party was greatly troubled by his opposition. Lincoln remarked in conversation that it could not but result in benefit to the Union cause to have so violent a man go to Chicago as a firebrand for his own party. And circumstances showed how shrewd the President was. Perhaps the Twentieth may well take lessons from the greatest genius of the Nineteenth.

Lincoln's liberal policy was again demonstrated in May, 1864, when the Journal of Commerce and the



A double page woodcut from Harper's Weekly, Dec. 31, 1864, showing Lincoln inviting the soldiers to join a Union Christmas Dinner.



"The Union Must and Shall Be Preserved." Double page drawing from Harper's Weekly, Oct. 1, 1864.

New York World published a forged proclamation bearing the President's name, calling in desperation for 400,000 troops. The two newspapers did not know the proclamation was a hoax when they published it, but their attacks upon the administration had been so bitter that they were suspected of publishing them in bad faith. So the Secretary of War immediately ordered them suppressed and their editors arrested. However, it soon became apparent that the proclamations had been published in good faith, the editors were not imprisoned and the publication of the papers was resumed two days after interruption.

His clemency in dealing with the Confederates is well known, and his appendix to his message to Congress in December, 1863, shows his spirit of conciliation. In it he guarantees a full pardon to all who

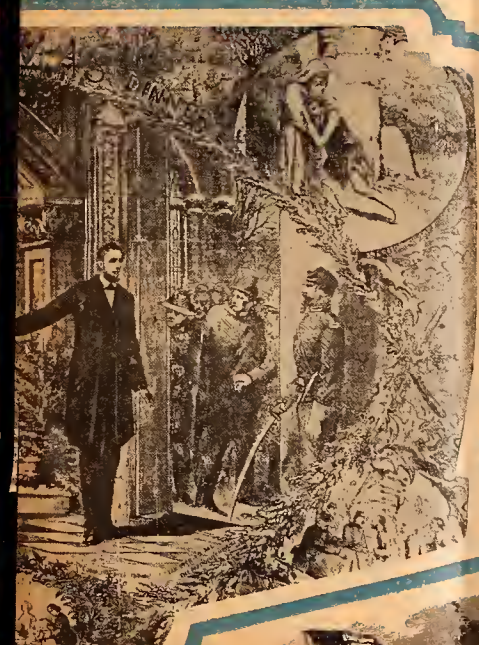
have been implicated in the rebellion, with certain specified exceptions, on condition of taking an oath to defend the Constitution of the United States and the union of the States thereunder; to abide by and support all acts of Congress and proclamation of the President made during the rebellion with reference to slaves, so long and so far as not repealed, modified or held void by Congress or by the decision of the Supreme Court.

Also, the evidence is conclusive that had Lincoln not been assassinated a much milder reconstruction policy would have followed in the South, thus in all probability healing the wounds of the Civil War in a much shorter period of time. This a lesson for his day and ours in conciliation, versus repression.

Lincoln was a strong believer in



Woodcut of President Lincoln made during in Harper's Weekly, April 27, 1865.



From Harper's Weekly, Dec. 31, 1864, showing President Lincoln inviting the soldiers to join a Union Christmas Dinner.



President Lincoln hoisting the American flag with 34 stars on Independence Hall, Philadelphia, Pa., Feb. 22, 1861.

Wood cut from Harper's Weekly, March 9, 1861.

withstanding all this, if the laws be continually despised and disregarded, if their rights to be secure in their persons and property are held by no better tenure than the caprice of the mob, the alienation of their affection for the Government is the natural consequence, and to that sooner or later it must come."

However, he believed public opinion in nearly all instances potent enough to change government, without a resort to violence. "Our Government rests in public opinion," he asserted. "Whoever can change public opinion can change Government just so much."

In his first message to Congress, in July, 1861, the President, referring to ballots versus bullets, stated: "It is now for them (the Confederates) to demonstrate to the world that those who can fairly carry an election can also suppress a rebellion; that the ballots are the rightful and peaceful successors of bullets; and that when ballots have fairly and constitutionally decided, there can be no appeal back to bullets; that there can be no successful appeal, except to ballots themselves, at succeeding elections. Such will be a great lesson of peace; teaching men that what they cannot take by an election, neither can they take by a war."

Speaking of revolution. In his first inaugural address he declared, "If by the mere force of numbers a majority should deprive a minority of any clearly written constitutional right, it might, in a moral point of view, justify revolution—certainly would if such a right were a vital one." Later, in the same speech, he said, "This country, with its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it. Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing government, they can exercise their constitutional right of amending it, or their revolutionary right to dismember or overthrow it."

All of which proves Lincoln a man of sane and peaceful tendencies, but what of what would Attorney General Palmer have done, if him had he, as a private citizen made a reference to the revolutionary right



President Lincoln's reinauguration at the Capitol in Washington, March 4, 1865.  
From Harper's Weekly, March 18, 1865.



Clement L. Vallandigham, leader of the Copperheads, whose sentence to imprisonment was commuted by President Lincoln to banishment within the Confederate lines.

From Harper's Weekly, Sept. 7, 1864.

to dismember or overthrow the government today?

Abraham Lincoln was not a man to identify himself with agitators against foreigners or creeds—although some pressure was brought upon him to do so. He showed himself much opposed to the principles of the American party, usually called the Know-Nothing's, a faction based upon a discrimination against foreign-born voters, advocating their exclusion from office and an extension of their period of naturalization, based also upon opposition to the Catholic religion. He wrote of this policy, "Understanding the spirit of our institutions to aim at the elevation of men, I am opposed to whatever tends to degrade them. I have some little notoriety for commiseration of the oppressed condition of the Negro, and I should be strongly inconsistent if I could favor any project for curtailing the relative rights of white men, even though it were in different hands and speaking other languages than my own."

At Cincinnati he stated, "In regard to foreigners I esteem them no better than other people, nor any worse." Writing of the bigotry of the Know-Nothing's in 1865 he asserted, with particular regard to the declaration, "All men are created equal." When the Know-Nothing's got control it will read, "All men are created equal except Negroes and foreigners and Catholics."

The rights of labor had come into discussion in Civil War times, and in his views concerning labor Lincoln was far in advance of the period in which he lived. Contained in his annual message to Congress, Dec. 3, 1861, is this statement, "Labor is prior to, and independent of, capital. Capital is only the fruit of labor, and could never have existed if labor had not first existed. Labor is the superior of capital, and deserves much the higher consideration." Capital has its rights, which are as worthy of protection as any other rights. Nor is it denied that there is, and probably will always be, a relation between capital and labor producing mutual benefits. The error is in assuming that the whole labor of the community exists within that relation. A few men own capital and that few avoid labor themselves, and with their cap-



# Opinions of Lincoln

..

Continued

that hire or buy another few to labor for them. A large majority belong to neither class—neither work for others nor have others working for them. It is not forgotten that a considerable number of persons mingle their own labor with capital—that is, they labor with their own hands and also buy or hire others to labor for them; but this is a mixed and not a distinct class.

"The men living are more worthy to be trusted than those who toil up from poverty—none less inclined to take or to touch aught which they have not honestly earned."

Earlier he had declared, "Labor is the great source from which nearly all—not all—great comforts are drawn. There is a difference in opinion about the elements of labor in society. Some men assume that there is a necessary connection between capital and labor, and that connection draws within it the whole labor of the community. They assume that nobody works unless capital excites them to work."

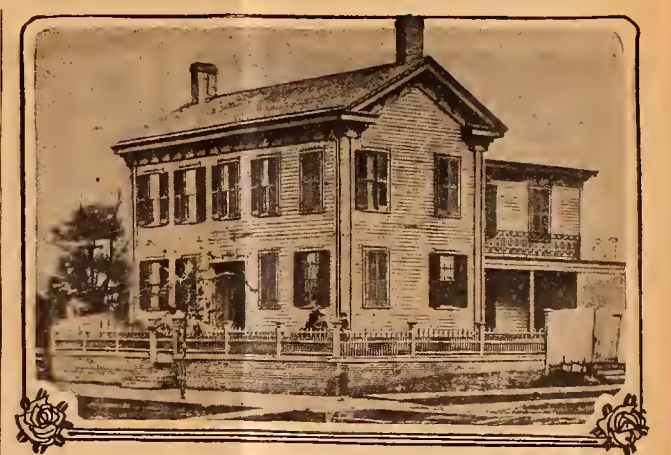
"The men who are industrious and sober and honest in their pursuit of their own interest should, after a while, accumulate capital, and after that should be allowed to enjoy it in peace, and also if they should choose, when they have accumulated it, to use it to save themselves from actual labor and hire other people to work for them."

At another time he wrote: "To secure to each laborer the product of his labor, or as nearly as possible, is a worthy object of any good government." Alike, "I agree that the workmen are the basis of all governments in the United States."

Lincoln was in favor of the strike as an economic weapon, and so declared himself in these words: "I am glad to see that a system of labor prevails in New England

men he stated: "The strongest bond of human sympathy, outside of the family relation, should be one uniting all working people of all nations and tongues and kindreds. Nor should this lead to a war on property, or the owners of property. Property is the fruit of labor; property is desirable; it is a positive good in the world. That some should be rich shows that others may become rich, and hence is just encouragement to industry and enterprise. Let not him who is houseless pull down the house of another, but let him work diligently and build one for himself, thus by example teaching that his own shall be safe from violence when built."

Very little aid and comfort would those who are crying for intervention in Mexico today get from Abraham Lincoln. He was entirely out of sympathy with the first Mexican War, and it may be presumed that he would still maintain that attitude today. In a speech to Congress in January, 1848, he said, "if he (President Polk) can show that the soil was ours where the first blood was shed, then I am with him. . . . But if he can not or will not do this—if by any pretenses or no pretenses he shall refuse or omit it—then I shall be fully convinced of what I more than suspect already—that he is deeply conscious of being in the wrong; that he feels the blood of this war like the blood of Abel, is crying to heaven against him; that originally having some strong moral convictions, I will not stop now give my opinion concerning—to involve the two countries in a war, and trusting to escape scrutiny by fixing the public gaze on the exceeding brightness of military glory, and that attractive rainbow that rises in showers of blood—that serpent's eye in the sky, and has swept on and on till disappointed in his calculation of



Lincoln in the Yard of His Home at Springfield, Ill., Feb. 12, 1861.

—National Pictorial News.

army into the midst of a peaceful Mexican settlement, frightening the inhabitants away, leaving their growing crops and other property to destruction, to you may appear a perfectly amiable, peaceful, unprovoked proceeding; but it can not appear so to us. . . . But if when the war had begun and had become the cause of the country, the giving of our money and our blood, in common with yours, was support of the cause, it is not true that we have always opposed the war."

Another current topic, that of woman suffrage, was just beginning to surface in Lincoln's day. And in the Civil War period, Lincoln was one of the earliest supporters in President Lincoln among the statesmen of America. Said Lincoln 34 years ago: "I go for sharing the privileges of Government with all those who assist in bearing its burdens; consequently I go for admitting all whites to the right of suffrage who pay taxes or bear arms (by no means excluding females)."

And yet another question of the day—slavery—concerning which raged through the Nineteenth and into the Twentieth Century, and culminating recently in the Federal amendment—Lincoln was called to pronounce upon. This, the temperance question, he declared, "Turn now to the temperance revolution. In it we shall find a stronger bondage broken, a viler slavery manumitted, a greater tyrant deposed, in it more of want supplied, more disease healed, more sorrow assuaged. By it no orphan starving, no widow weeping. By it none wounded in feeling, none injured in interest; even the dram-

maker and the dram-seller will have glided into other occupations so gradually as never to have felt the change, and will stand ready to join all others in the universal song of gladness. And what a noble ally this to the cause of political freedom; with such an aid its march can not fail to be on and on, till every drop of earth shall drink in rich fruition the sorrow-quenching draught of perfect liberty. Happy day when—all over politics controlled, all passions subdued, all matter subjected—mind, all-conquering mind, shall live and move the monarch of the world."

These the words of Abraham Lincoln, humanitarian, on some of the topics of our day and his. A common sense and not a radical pro-

gram, his, but the striking divergence from it by some of the political powers of our day, induces the wonder concerning the direction in which the world is traveling.

How many are there in the two great political parties today so fettered as to maintain the revolutionary right to dismember or overthrow government in certain instances, the rights of foreigners, the superior right of labor to capital, the wrong of Mexican intervention? One fact that were Mr. Lincoln to appear on the political horizon today his political opponents would with one accord find in one voice call him Bolshevik. But there is consolation that history would never undo, and that posterity would still hail him as the great American.

## Distance of Bird Migration

THE distances which some birds cover in their migrations is almost beyond belief, says the New York Sun. The golden plover, which breeds in the Arctic region, is known to winter as far south as the pampas of Argentina, fully 5,000 miles from where it rears its young. It is believed that half this distance is covered in a single non-stop flight. The birds are known to launch out over the Atlantic in the vicinity of Nova Scotia, and there is only an occasional record of their being seen again until they appear in Northern South America.

The Arctic tern is a greater traveler by far than the golden plover. It nests from Maine northward to within a few degrees of the Pole. Those that go furthest North thus spend the summer in a land of continuous day. When the Arctic tern migrates it goes to a region in the Antarctic equally near the South Pole, where it again spends the other half of the year in perpetual daylight. The only time some of these birds experience full darkness is thought to be the few days it takes them to cross the tropics. Certain individuals of this species must travel nearly 25,000 miles each year in their migrations.



Where Lincoln practiced law. The old court house in Logan County, Illinois, which is still standing. It no longer serves as a court house, but is being preserved as an historic relic.

—Graphic News Bureau.

under which laborers can strike if they want to, where they are not obliged to work under all circumstances, and are not bound to be obliged to labor whether you pay them or not. I like the system which lets a man choose when he wants to, and wish it might prevail elsewhere."

But while the great humanitarian was the friend of labor, he realized the function of capital and deplored any antagonism between the two. To a committee of New York work-

men he said, "The man who might be subdued, he now finds himself, he knows not where."

Again, speaking of the Whig attitude towards the election war he stated, "If to say 'the war was unnecessary and unconstitutional' commenced by the President by opposing the war, then the Whigs have very generally opposed it. Whenever they have spoken at all they have said this; and they have said it on what has appeared good reason to them; the marching of an

## A Strange Escape

Continued

(Continued From Page Five.)

strange sight, they silently watched the ceremonies. With our faces to the altar, and our backs to the company of onlookers, as though unaware of their presence, we continued our hideous chanting, facing about only at such intervals as we had practiced during the night.

During these brief periods we counted these who had gathered, and when in our judgment this represented all of the band, we played our last card. Anointing not only our lips and nostrils, but also the entire lower portion of our face with the ointment, we opened the censor, thrust in the live coals covered them with incense and without once breaking the continuous ceremony, suspended this from the outstretched hand of the statue before the altar.

Ceasing our chanting, lest by breathing too freely of the incense we should feel the heat of our Iowa plot, we threw upon our knees

doing homage first before the statue and then before the altar, at intervals smearing our lips and nostrils freely with the contents of the lit tapers.

Following our example, our visitors also fell upon their knees, watching our every movement with undisguised interest.

Although in reality we had only a little time to wait, it seemed eternally so. Before we were conscious of any visible evidence of success in our prayer, a great light shone was lying so heavily upon our shoulders that we had largely forgotten our priestly services, and were merely kneeling, swaying our bodies from side to side, paying in regard to our holy movement, and one of the men before us suddenly nodded his head, lurched forward and toppled over his side.

Our next impulse was to seize this opportunity to run for the door, endeavoring to make good our escape, but our better judgment held us back. Again we filled the censor with fresh coals and a supply of the precious powder. Raking a little pile of the glowing embers together

on the altar itself we emptied this urn upon these.

DURING all of this time no one uttered a word. With the censor we descended from the altar as though still in keeping with the ceremony, and when our only and our enemies we satisfied ourselves that each had breathed deeply of the burning incense, we all breathed heavily as though in a labored sleep. Eagerly, yet without haste, we moved toward the outer door, swinging censor before us. At last we reached the open air. A hundred yards away, guarded only by one man, were all the horses, including our own, saddled and with packs mounted ready for instant departure.

With dignified and priest-like bearing we crossed the open space where the guard stood. Aided by our appearance, this unfortunate creature bowed forward. As he bowed a sharp rap with the butt of a revolver stretched him upon the ground.

Throwing aside our clumsy costumes, we made up in action all that we lacked of our former dignity. Crossing the wrists of the prostrate guard behind his back, we bound them together securely with the long bridle reins of his own mount. With an eye constantly on the old temple door we quickly divided the other impatient horses into two groups, fastening each animal to his neighbor. Mounting our own horses and fastening the lead lines to our saddles, we galloped out into the open country and to safety.

## Submarine Oil Lines

MANY of the most productive oil wells in the State of Vera Cruz, Mex., are situated near the port of Tuxtepec. For some distance from the shore the water is so shallow that few of the large steamships can get into port. The oil companies hit upon the idea of laying submarine pipe lines to points where the largest oil tankers can be conveniently moored, loading in any state of the tide and weather.

There are now five of these great iron pipes in operation. They are from six to eight inches in diameter, and four of them are nearly a mile long. They terminate in 45 feet of

water, where it is so deep that the waves have no effect upon them. When they were laid divers fastened to the end of each 120 feet of flexible hose is a small, flexible hose. When not in use the free end is coiled on the sea bottom, where its position is marked by a small buoy attached to the hose by a stout chain.

When the tank steamships arrive they moor themselves to the permanent buoys near by, take up the marked buoy with a derrick, raise the flexible hose to the deck of the ship, and attach it to the tank openings. By means of a signal the captain of the ships notify the oil company on shore, and the valves that control the flow of oil through the pipe line. Generally it takes about 15 to 20 hours to load one of the large 15,000-ton tankers, which means that the pipes deliver 450 barrels of oil an hour.—New York Sun.

### Hardly

A LABOR boy who was in charge of a swamp-reclamation project met one of his workmen running down the road shouting and waving his arms.

"What's the matter?" he demanded.

"Oh! help! help! help. Bringa da peeki! Bringa da peeki! Giovanni's stuck in the mud!"

"Is that so? How far is he in?"

"Oh! up to his knees! Up to his knees!"

"Oh, well! If that's all the farther he's in he can walk out," said the foreman.

"No! No!" exclaimed the Italian. "He canna walk out! He canna walk out! He wronged his leg!"

You Will Find the Supplement to This Magazine  
Folded Inside of the Colored Comics Section